

## Board of Health Meeting September 29, 2022

### Summary

#### COVID-19 UPDATE

- We continue to have COVID-19 infections in the region (as is the case across the province).
- Perhaps early indications of a new wave in the province; we are seeing some early signs that the new wave is upon us here in our region (rising case counts, rising percent positivity, rising syndromic surveillance).
- Severe outcomes (including hospitalizations and deaths) continue to be low at this time.

#### LIVING WITH COVID-19

- We are moving away from the emergency response phase of the pandemic; however, I am expecting continued cases and waves of COVID-19—make no mistake, COVID-19 is not behind us.
- With the current strain of COVID-19, severe outcomes are less frequent. Severe outcomes are most common among:
  - Those who are unvaccinated or undervaccinated
  - The elderly (ages 70+)
  - Individuals with underlying health conditions, especially those that are immunocompromised and have chronic diseases
- Chronic health effects due to COVID-19 (sometimes called “Long COVID”) impacts many people who don’t have severe outcomes. Those who are unvaccinated or undervaccinated are more likely to have these chronic health effects.
- The province continues to adjust their COVID-19 guidance to pull COVID-19 into our response to other respiratory pathogens.
- Vaccination is shifting towards periodic booster doses, based on the prevalence of COVID-19 and the evidence of vaccine effectiveness.
- Our messages remain the same:
  - Vaccination remains the single most effective intervention to prevent COVID-19 infection, severe outcomes, and Long COVID.
  - Other effective strategies include wearing a well-fitted high-quality mask, maintaining distancing from others, and avoiding crowded spaces. Good ventilation also remains important, especially as we head indoors for fall and winter.

- There is the possibility of a bad cold and flu season with a mix of COVID-19 and other respiratory pathogens.
  - This is something we've seen in the southern hemisphere, which recently had their winter. For example, Australia just had a bad flu season that started two months earlier than normal and with more cases than their typical seasons.
  - We just had two years of limited transmission of flus and colds, and people will have less immunity to these new strains of cold and flu—this means we could very well have a bad cold and flu season as we head indoors, kids are now back at school, and the holiday season approaches.
  - Small children whose immune systems will have encountered few respiratory viruses, in general, can be more severely affected by respiratory illnesses.
  - It is especially important to get vaccinated against the flu this year, for everyone and especially for young children.

## RECOVERY

- Although the emergency phase of the COVID-19 pandemic is over, the health unit will need to have an active recovery process.
- What is meant by 'active recovery' is:
  - We continue to do COVID-19 work, especially vaccination and working on outbreak prevention and management with organizations such as hospitals, LTCHs, schools, and others.
  - Our staff have been pushed to their limits in the past two years, and we need to attend to their mental health and the health of our organization as a whole.
  - There is work that we have not done in the past two years due to the pandemic, and which we are restarting. For example, inspection of personal service settings (nail salons, hairdressers, etc.) and health promotion work such as healthy foods and physical activity.
  - Peoples' health has been affected by the societal changes during COVID-19, and we need to respond to new health needs. For example, deaths due to opioid poisoning rose during the pandemic. Other health issues may include alcohol use and mental health, especially among youth.
- We continue to do critical work to protect the health of our communities.
- We are resuming work to promote health, including working with municipalities and building on partnerships forged during the emergency phase of pandemic response.
- We have a budget deficit that has been managed over time and is currently being offset by the workload from COVID-19 and the temporary provincial COVID-19 funding. The province has just confirmed that they will continue the temporary COVID-19 funding for 2023. We will continue to plan for mitigation of our budgetary risks in the future.

## **STAFF PRESENTATIONS DURING BOARD MEETING:**

### **2021 COMMUNITY REPORT**

- The 2021 Community Report focuses on the COVID-19 response over the last two years, along with staff experiences while working during the pandemic, how programs and services adapted and transformed, along with select COVID-19 performance indicators. The Report is located on our website at : [Community Report: Special COVID-19 Edition - Leeds, Grenville and Lanark District Health Unit](#)

### **DISEASES OF PUBLIC HEALTH SIGNIFICANCE (DOPHS) DASHBOARD**

- The Diseases of Public Health Significance (DOPHS) Surveillance Dashboard is an interactive assessment & surveillance tool that provides data on diagnosed reportable diseases for the Health Unit. This is part of the “Systematic and ongoing” data collection that is discussed around population health assessment and surveillance in the OPHS with contents being updated monthly. A link to the DOPHS Dashboard can be found on the health unit website at: [Diseases of Public Health Significance \(DOPHS\) Surveillance Dashboard - Leeds, Grenville and Lanark District Health Unit](#)